

## **Farewell Reception for Christie Brandau**

January 20, 2005

I feel truly honored to be included among this distinguished group of speakers gathered here today to pay tribute to Christie Brandau, a true friend of Michigan libraries and a great supporter of the Michigan Library Association.

My first opportunity to meet Christie came within weeks of my return to Michigan as the new Director of the Library at Saginaw Valley State University when, in the winter of 2002, I attended my first Council of Library Deans and Directors meeting at Central Michigan University. I had just spent 16 years working in academic libraries in Virginia, and at my first meeting of academic library directors in Michigan, here was our State Librarian, talking about something called MeL, and other statewide library projects. A few weeks after that first encounter, I ran into her again, at a larger group of academic library types just down the road from Saginaw Valley, in Bay City. And, once again, she talked about this Michigan eLibrary and what it would mean to every Michigan resident including the students and faculty of our universities and colleges. And I thought to myself, Now here s a State Librarian who knows how to talk to academic librarians! And she s not afraid to leave Lansing). Literally within weeks of my return to Michigan, I felt more of a connection to our State Librarian and her vision of library cooperation than I ever felt in the 16 years I spent in Virginia. So, I thank Christie for having a vision of library service that all libraries can embrace.

And then, as I started to read the MLA newsletter and the Library of Michigan s newsletter, I kept reading about this Library of Michigan Road Show, where Christie and the Executive Directors of MLA and MLC would travel around the state, visiting public



libraries large and small. And I thought to myself, Now here s a State Librarian who really believes in collaboration and inclusiveness! So, I thank Christie for demonstrating her belief in the value of collaboration between library organizations.

And that s when it started to dawn on me that Christie Brandau, our State Librarian, really likes to get around. When I called her and invited her to speak at the dedication of our new library addition at Saginaw Valley, she came, she spoke eloquently, and she charmed my President by quoting the words of one of his previous speeches in her remarks. And I thought, she may get around, but she also does her homework. So, I thank Christie for being able to talk so readily and easily to any audience about the importance of libraries in their own particular community.

These were the wonderful impressions I already had of Christie when I became President-Elect of the Michigan Library Association about a year and a half ago. When I invited her to our Executive Board meetings, she came, reinforcing her message of support and collaboration. When MLA s auditor solemnly explained our financial difficulties and his doubts about our future as a going concern (as he diplomatically stated it), who did I talk to? Christie. I said, I don t want to be the last President of MLA. But I may be if we don t do something to turn this association around, to start all over again, to develop a plan so that we have future. And, she threw us a lifeline. She encouraged us to apply for LSTA funding to hire a consultant to help us develop a strategic plan for MLA. Our request was funded, we put together a great plan with lots of input from the library community, and we expect to release it shortly. And you re going to see reflected in it the inclusiveness, the collaboration, and the shared vision that she constantly promoted. So, I thank Christie for throwing us a lifeline, for her trust and confidence in MLA, and for her steady words of encouragement.



As I wrap up this tribute, I want to acknowledge briefly just a couple of other endearing qualities Christie possesses. One would be her ability to squeeze blood out of a turnip. And that would be a slightly veiled reference to her success in getting a certain library system vendor (not known to readily open its checkbook) to part with a few thousand dollars to sponsor the MLA All-Conference Reception and MeLCat Celebration we had in Traverse City a few months ago.

And last but not least, her endearing (and enduring) sense of humor. I talked earlier about how much she gets around. Many of you may remember the Librarian on the Loose promotion we did for the MLA Auction last year, where we sent the Librarian Action Figure around the state and photographed her visiting various libraries and other sites across Michigan. Little did Christie know that she was the model for the Librarian on the Loose, and that the Librarian on the Loose was actually shadowing Christie as she traveled around the state. So now we all know, Christie, about your visit to the Noir Leather shop in Royal Oak, your cozy rendezvous on the porch of a Victorian dollhouse in Fremont, sliding down the banister at the Ypsilanti Public Library, sipping wine at the Brandon Township Library, and checking out the guys at the Woodward Dream Cruise. I suspect that's why she's really leaving Michigan; her secret life has been revealed!

But, like the Librarian on the Loose did at the Southfield Public Library, Christie also walks on water. Please accept my sincere thanks for all you have done for the Michigan Library Association and for all Michigan libraries. It has been a special privilege to work with you!

-- Linda Farynk, MLA President